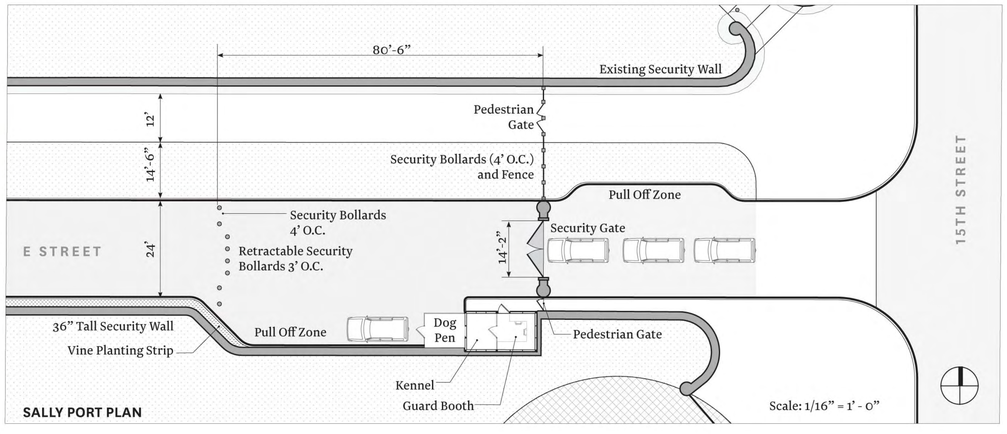
PRESIDENT'S PARK SOUTH

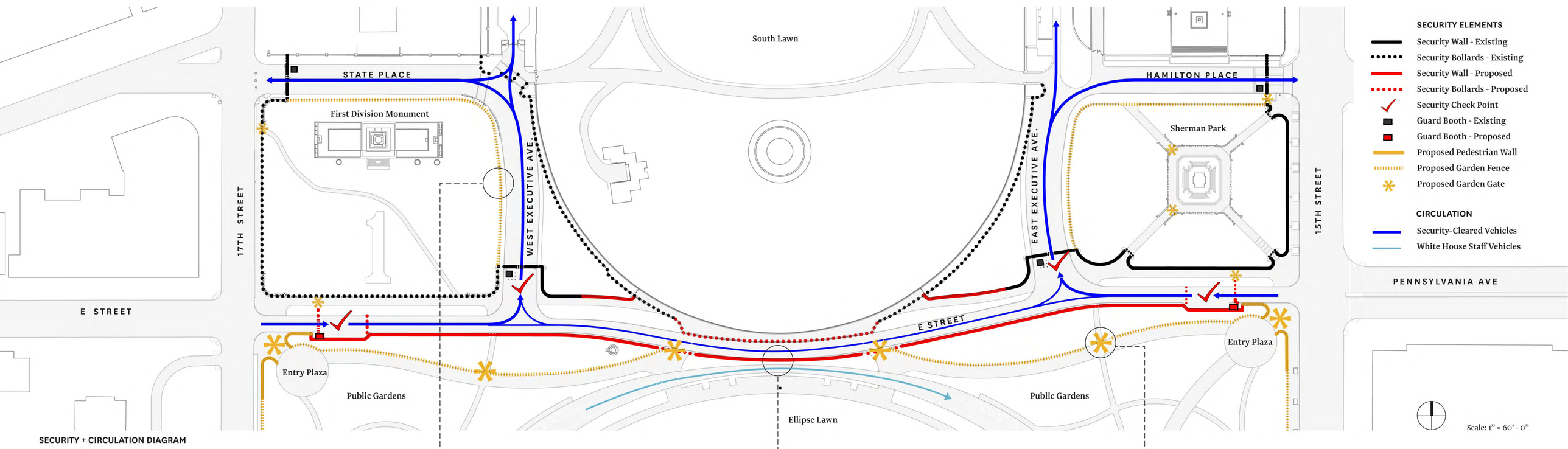
VIEW FROM E STREET AND 15TH STREET LOOKING SOUTHWEST

EXISTING CONDITIONS, 2011

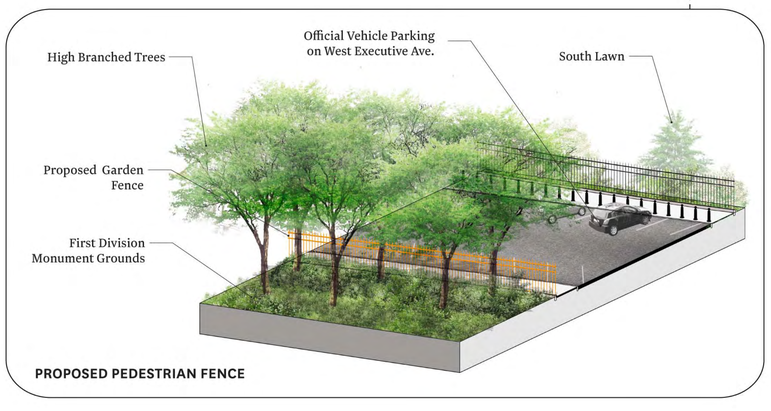
Optimal security and enriched pedestrian experience go hand in hand. In this scheme, security elements are embedded in attractive plantings. The separations between public space and areas of controlled access to the White House are clarified, making security efficient and transforming the civic areas bordering the South Lawn and Ellipse into engaging and inviting landscapes. Where E Street intersects 15th and 17th Streets, gated checkpoints signal limited access and are set back to minimize contact between visitors and vehicles. Welcoming plazas here lead visitors to shady areas and then either to the iconic south view of the White House or to paths that meander through the verdant landscape surrounding the Ellipse.



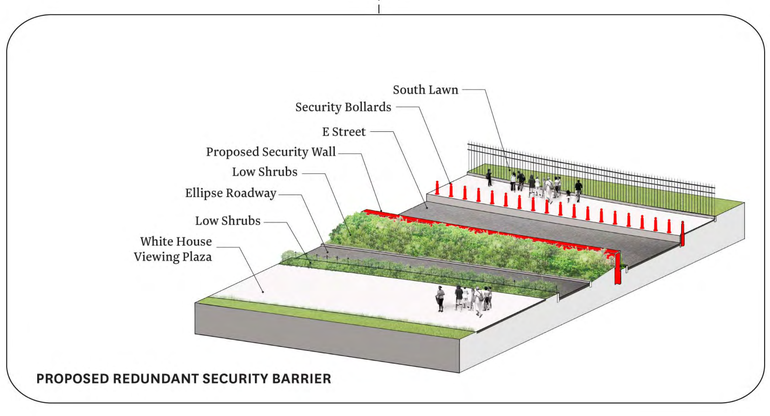
E STREET SECURITY CHECK POINT



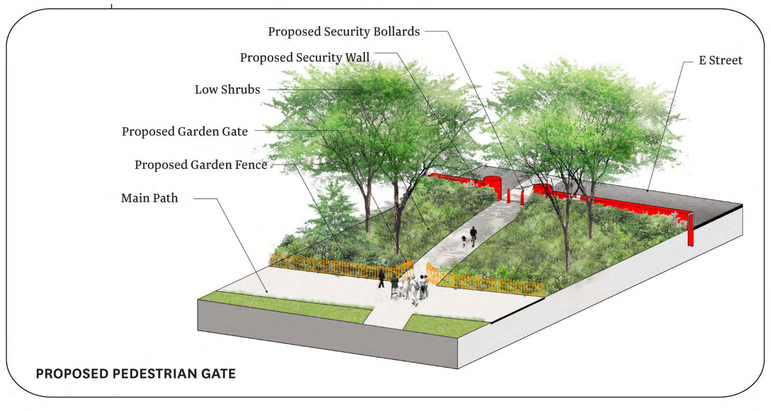
SECURITY + CIRCULATION DIAGRAM



PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN FENCE



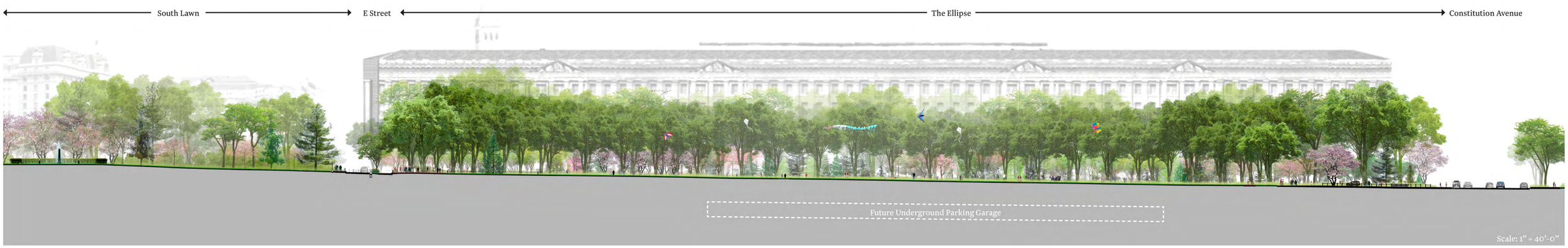
PROPOSED REDUNDANT SECURITY BARRIER



PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN GATE

MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH ASSOCIATES

WEEKEND VIEW OF THE PUBLIC GARDENS FRAMING THE ELLIPSE

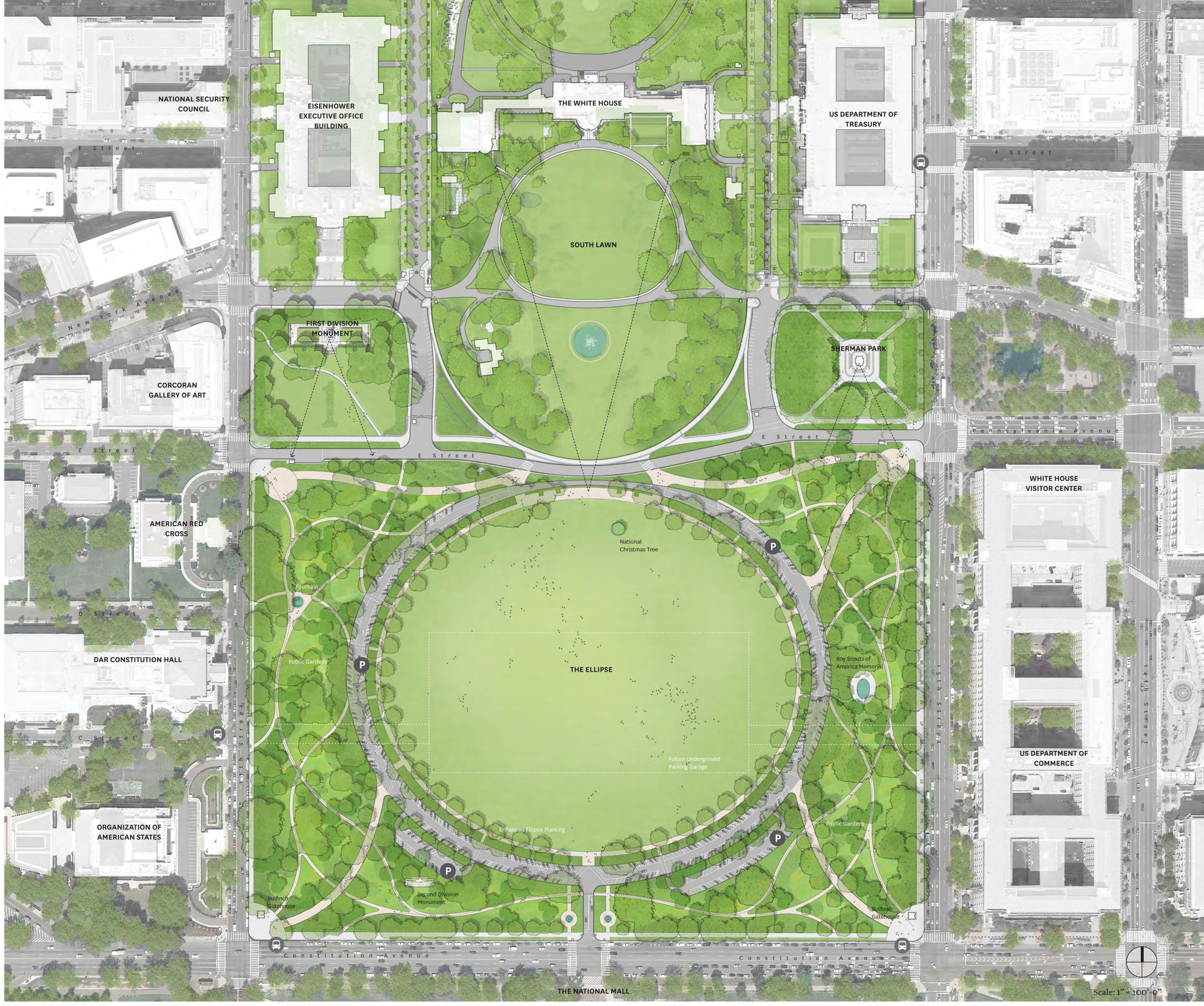


MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH ASSOCIATES

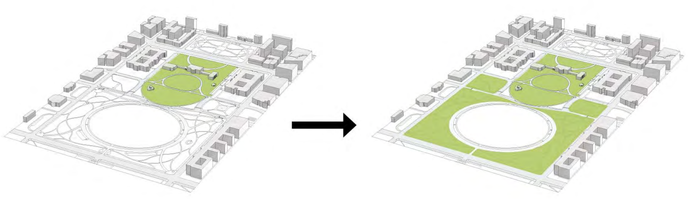
The security system now at President's Park South was a necessary response to September 11. But fresh principles can create a more appealing public realm while meeting the uncompromisable needs of security. Our team demonstrates that, by embedding security infrastructure into plantings, safety can be achieved almost invisibly, in warm, dignified, and elegant ways. Crash-rated walls, bollards, fences, and gates are transformed into integral and enjoyable park features: Walls have plant beds, fences define elegant spaces, bollards create hospitable, permeable borders, and elegant gates serve as thresholds welcoming visitors. A landscape that might suggest fear becomes a landscape of pleasure.

A nearly continuous planted barrier wall, open to pedestrians at four gated locations, calms the irregular south boundary of the E Street/South Executive Drive corridor and builds on recent security improvements to the north. At the entry points on 15th and 17th Streets, permanent guard booths are inboard of city streets, with checkpoint activities behind a handsome secure vehicular gate that eliminates the current confusion between pedestrian and restricted zones.

Although the Ellipse is used well for seasonal events, day-to-day visitors likely find the 52-acre unwelcoming. Envisioned by L'Enfant as an important link between the White House and the monumental core, today President's Park South lacks an appropriate human scale. This scheme reinvigorates the Ellipse frame by drawing inspiration from Andrew Jackson Downing's 1851 vision of a "large circular open space surrounded by an avenue of elms, a carriage drive, and a series of footpaths winding through shady groves." The park's edges surround the free-flowing openness of the Ellipse with complementary moments of garden-scaled intimacy. Alluring entrances at all four corners of the Ellipse lead into a new path system that works in concert with increased tree cover, low shrubs plentiful benches, and other landscape improvements to subtly reinforce the importance of the Ellipse and bridge the distance between the White House and the National Mall.

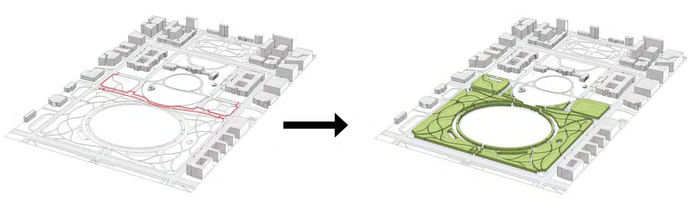


FRAME THE ELLIPSE
The landscape of the side panels is reinvigorated to become a destination for park visitors that expands the intimacy of the White House gardens for public enjoyment. The lush public gardens compliment the openness of the Ellipse.



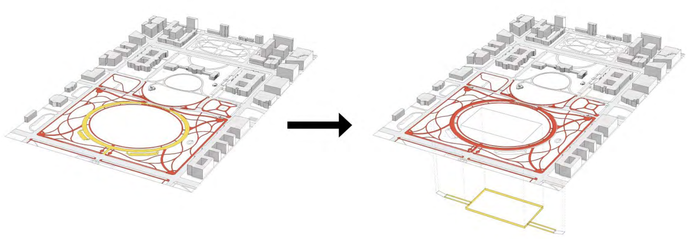
THE WHITE HOUSE GARDENS ARE JOINED WITH THE PEOPLE'S GARDENS

EMBED SECURITY
Improved security elements are embedded as part of the proposed gardens, minimizing their visual impact and integrating the E Street corridor within a more comprehensive park design.



IMPROVED SECURITY IS EMBEDDED WITHIN GARDENS

ENRICH THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE
Additional walkways through the side panel gardens enhance the pedestrian circulation and visitor experience. Recognizing the current need for surface parking and the negative impact of vehicles on this national monument, the scheme proposes a future parking structure under the Ellipse.



INTERIM PARKING ON ELLIPSE WITH A FUTURE UNDERGROUND PARKING STRUCTURE

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